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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 538 - APRIL 7, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING

PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. ISRAEL. SHARP DIFFERENCES WITH THE US AND THE DIMMING PROSPECTS FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT WITH EGYPT DO NOT APPEAR TO HAVE SUBSTANTIALLY AFFECTED THE CORE OF PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S PUBLIC SUPPORT. A RESPECTED PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY PUBLISHED YESTERDAY INDICATES THAT 56 PERCENT OF THE ISRAELI PUBLIC BELIEVES THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT IS DOING EVERYTHING IT CAN TO OBTAIN PEACE AND THAT ONLY 18 PERCENT BELIEVES IT SHOULD BE DOING MORE. ANOTHER SURVEY, ALSO PUBLISHED YESTERDAY, SHOWS THAT A SMALL PLURALITY BELIEVES US POLICY SUPPORTS THE ARAB STATES MORE THAN IT DOES ISRAEL.

2. EMBASSY TEL AVIV BELIEVES THAT THE PEACE RALLY LAST WEEKEND, ATTENDED BY SOME 20,000 PEOPLE, REPRESENTS AN IMPRESSIVE BUT STILL LIMITED SEGMENT OF THE ISRAELI PUBLIC. SHOULD THE NEW MOVEMENT PICK UP MOMENTUM, HOWEVER, IT COULD BECOME A CATALYST FOR A NATIONAL DEBATE ON THE ISSUES AFFECTING PEACE.

3. NEVERTHELESS, THE LABOR ALIGNMENT REMAINS IN DISARRAY. POLICY DIFFERENCES, FACTIONAL TENSIONS, AND PERSONAL RIVALRIES CONTINUE TO HAMPER EFFORTS BY PERES TO ESTABLISH HIS AUTHORITY AS PARTY LEADER AND TO WELD THE ALIGNMENT INTO AN EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION.
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4. AS A RESULT OF THESE ANTAGONISMS, IN ADDITION TO HIS OWN PAST VIEWS, AND HIS ASSOCIATION WITH DAYAN, PERES HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO MOUNT AN EFFECTIVE ATTACK AGAINST BEGIN'S FOREIGN POLICY. PERES, IN PARTICULAR, HAS BEEN KEPT FROM EXPLOITING BEGIN'S BLUNDERING ON THE SETTLEMENTS ISSUE BY STRONG PRO-SETTLEMENT PRESSURE FROM THE AHDUT AVODAH FACTION OF LABOR AND FROM THE SETTLEMENT FEDERATIONS AFFILIATED WITH MAPAI AND AHDUT AVODAH. ON THE ISSUE OF BEGIN'S SINAI CONCESSIONS, PERES HAS BEEN HOBBOLED BY HIS DESIRE TO KEEP THE RAFAH SALIENT AND BY A WIDESPREAD PERCEPTION IN LABOR AND MAPAM THAT BEGIN HAS GIVEN AWAY TOO MUCH.

5. IN RECENT DAYS, PERES HAS FOCUSED ON WEST BANK CONCESSIONS. BEGIN'S REFUSAL TO APPLY THE WITHDRAWAL PROVISION OF 242 TO THE WEST BANK HAS GIVEN PERES AN ISSUE AROUND WHICH MOST LABORITES CAN RALLY. MOREOVER, PERES CAN REASONABLY HOPE TO ENHANCE LABOR'S ELECTORAL PROSPECTS IF HE BUILDS HIS ATTACK ON THE ISSUE OF WEST BANK WITHDRAWALS, PROVIDED THAT BEGIN REMAINS INFLEXIBLE. FURTHERMORE, PERES MAY HOPE TO POSITION LABOR FOR A

MAJOR ROLE IN AN ALTERNATIVE COALITION WITHIN THE LIFE OF THE PRESENT KNESSET, IF HERUT'S OPPOSITION TO WEST BANK CONCESSIONS PRODUCES A SPLIT IN THE COALITION.

6. ON THE OTHER HAND, PERES HAS CERTAIN PROBLEMS IN ADVOCATING WEST BANK CONCESSIONS. HE AGREED WITH DAYAN, HIS LONG-TIME MENTOR, IN OPPOSING TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS THERE FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS AND CAME TO SUPPORT THEM PUBLICLY ONLY THIS YEAR. FURTHER, PERES' ABILITY TO EXPLOIT THE WEST BANK ISSUE DEPENDS ON BEGIN'S CONTINUED INFLEXIBILITY. SHOULD BEGIN OR A LIKUD SUCCESSOR ACCEPT THE PRINCIPLE OF WEST BANK CONCESSIONS, PERES' CAMPAIGN WOULD COLLAPSE IN VIEW OF THE BITTER DISSENSIONS WITHIN THE LABOR ALIGNMENT ON THE EXTENT OF THE WEST BANK CONCESSIONS ISRAEL SHOULD MAKE.

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CESSIONS ISRAEL SHOULD MAKE.

7. THERE HAVE BEEN RECURRENT REPORTS THAT LABOR PARTY PERSONALITIES ARE IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE LEADERS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY. PERES IS REPORTED TO CONSULT DAYAN REGULARLY AND MAY BE TALKING TO WEIZMAN AND THE NRP AS WELL. PERES WOULD BE EAGER TO PARTICIPATE IN A NEW GOVERNMENT, BUT HIS COLLEAGUES WOULD HESITATE TO FORM A COALITION WITH THE LIBERALS BECAUSE OF THE OPPOSITION OF MOST LABORITIES AND ALL OF MAPAM TO THE LIBERALS' ECONOMIC POLICY. NEVERTHELESS, A POSSIBLE FUTURE COALITION WOULD HAVE TO BE BUILT AROUND THE PARLIAMENTARY STRENGTH OF THE LABOR PARTY. THE PARTY, UNDER PERES' LEADERSHIP, PROBABLY WOULD JUMP AT THE CHANCE OF FORMING A GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD EXCLUDE HERUT AND SEEK A PEACE AGREEMENT ON LABOR'S TERMS. (CONFIDENTIAL)

8. LEBANON. BOTH THE FRENCH AND NORWEGIANS UNITS OF UNIFIL REPORTEDLY HAD MINOR CLASHES WITH THE PALESTINIANS YESTERDAY. AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT SAID THAT THE FRENCH AND PALESTINIANS EXCHANGED SHOTS NEAR TYRE. NO CASUALTIES WERE REPORTED; CONFIRMED REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE NORWEGIANS WERE FIRED UPON NEAR THE EASTERN-MOST LITANI BRIDGE AND NEAR HASBAYYA, WHERE ONE NORWEGIAN WAS WOUNDED.

9. OUR CONSULATE GENERAL IN JERUSALEM STATES THAT, ACCORDING TO THE RED CROSS, THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHAT STATUS TO GIVE ARAB PRISONERS CAPTURED IN SOUTH LEBANON. THE RED CROSS HOPES THAT THEIR TREATMENT, IF NOT STATUS, WILL BE THE SAME AS THAT ACCORDED TO POW'S. INITIAL TREATMENT, HOWEVER, HAS FALLEN SHORT OF THAT AND HAS INCLUDED BEATINGS AND TORTURE. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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10. WEST BANK. IN A CONVERSATION WITH OUR CONSUL-GENERAL IN JERUSALEM, NABLUS MAYOR SHAKA (WHO HAD RECENTLY CONCLUDED A SUCCESSFUL FOUR-MONTH FUND RAISING TOUR IN THE ARAB WORLD), CLAIMED HE HAS FOUND NO REASON TO ALTER HIS SUPPORT FOR THE PLO AND ITS DEMANDS FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AND AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE. HE ALSO SAID THAT INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS CANNOT BE ACCEPTED BY WEST BANK PALESTINIANS IN DEFIANCE OF THE PLO (ALTHOUGH HE HINTED THAT THEY MIGHT BE IMPOSED BY OUTSIDE POWERS). MOREOVER, HE BELIEVES THAT SADAT'S INITIATIVE WAS A MISTAKE AND IS NOW DEAD AND THAT US POLICY LACKS BALANCE AND ENCOURAGES ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE. SHAKA DESCRIBED LOCAL RELATIONS WITH THE ISRAELIS AS TERRIBLE. (CONFIDENTIAL)

11. ARAB SUMMIT. EFFORTS BY MODERATE ARAB STATES -- JORDAN, SUDAN, AND SAUDI ARABIA -- TO CONVENE AN ARAB SUMMIT IN ORDER TO RESTORE ARAB UNITY RECEIVED A BOOST YESTERDAY WHEN NORTH YEMEN AGREED TO JOIN THE ARAB SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE. JORDAN APPEARS TO BE PLAYING AN INSTRUMENTAL ROLE IN PURSUING THE IDEA OF AN ARAB SUMMIT. KING HUSSEIN IS PLANNING TO SEND ENVOYS TO THE OTHER ARABS IN ORDER TO DISCUSS AN AGENDA FOR SUCH A MEETING. (CONFIDENTIAL) VANCE

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